

KORACH

FUSION
WITH RABBI JASON



with
Rabbi Jason Sobel

5786 - THE YEAR OF OPEN WINDOWS

TORAH PORTIONS
Parashat Korach



THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTIONS NUMBERS 16:1-18:32

Parashat Korach / פרשת קורח

In this weeks guide...

COMMENTARY..... 1

Parashat Korach exposes the danger of rebellion disguised as spirituality and righteousness. Korach uses true language about Israel's holiness to challenge God's appointed order, revealing how truth detached from humility and submission can become destructive. The parashah ultimately reminds us that godly authority is not seized through ambition or charisma but is received from God and confirmed by the fruit of faithful service.

NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN..... 2

The New Testament tie-in explores the unique inheritance of the tribe of Levi and how their scattered presence throughout Israel served as a reminder of both God's nearness and the selfless nature of priestly service. This becomes a picture of the believer's inheritance in Messiah, reminding us that our ultimate portion is not earthly status or possession, but participation in God's Kingdom and presence. The passage encourages believers to see themselves as heirs of an eternal inheritance reserved by God Himself.

HEBREW WORD STUDY..... 3

The Hebrew word *edah* describes more than a gathering of people; it refers to a covenant community united by shared testimony, memory, and responsibility. Israel's identity as an *edah* meant they were called not only to gather together, but to bear witness to God's actions and faithfulness through the way they lived. The study challenges us to view community as a sacred calling rooted in shared purpose and faithful remembrance.



OVER VIEW

This portion is named after Korah, a prominent leader among the Israelites. The readings recount his failed attempt to overthrow the distinct leadership of Moses and Aaron, as he insisted, "All the community is holy—all of them—and Adonai is with them!" (Numbers 16:3). God supernaturally and devastatingly quashes the uprising, and the passages that follow confirm Aaron's priesthood. Authority has always been a source of conflict among people, even among the people of God. As we read this portion, we are reminded that the Holy Spirit sees the purity, humility, and trust in our hearts.

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Parashat Korach / פרשת קורח | with **Rabbi Jason Sobel**

Staff Contributor

COMMENTARY

Parashah Korach is not really about rebellion; it's about the kind of rebellion that disguises itself as pseudo-righteousness. Korach doesn't show up shaking his fist at God. He shows up sounding spiritual: "You've gone too far! All the community is holy—all of them—and ADONAI is with them! Then why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of ADONAI?" (Numbers 16:3 TLV).

That's what makes this dangerous. He cloaks ego in theology. On the surface, Korach's argument isn't entirely wrong. Israel *is* called to be a holy nation. But he weaponizes a true statement to tear down a God-ordained structure. That's the issue. Truth, when divorced from submission to God's order, becomes a tool of chaos. Korach isn't fighting for holiness; he's fighting for control.

Moses' response is telling. He falls on his face. No defensiveness, no scrambling to protect his position. Why? Because Moses understands something Korach does not: calling is not self-appointed. Authority in the Kingdom of God is not seized; it's received. You don't assume the role of a kohen because you feel qualified. You stand in it because God said so.

The test Moses sets up (bringing censers before Adonai) cuts straight to the heart of the matter. Who gets to draw near? That's the real question. Korach assumes proximity to holiness is a right. The Torah says it's a responsibility, and a dangerous one if approached wrongly. Nadav and Avihu already proved that earlier in Leviticus. They learned the hard way that you don't redefine access to God on your own terms.

Then the earth opens.

It swallows Korach and his followers whole. It's dramatic, but it's not random. The ground itself responds because creation recognizes disorder when it sees it. This is not just punishment; it's exposure.

Korach's rebellion wasn't a new path forward; it was a rupture in the created order.

And yet, the story doesn't end there. The next day, the congregation complains again. That's the part most people miss. Even after judgment, the people side with Korach. Why? Because Korach's message scratches an itch. People don't like divinely set boundaries when those boundaries limit their access, their influence, or their sense of equality. God's response is swift, but so is Moses and Aaron's intercession.

Aaron runs into the middle of the plague with incense, standing "between the dead and the living" (Numbers 16:48). That image matters. The same priesthood that Korach rejected is the one that now preserves life. The role of the kohen isn't about privilege—it's about mediation. It's costly. It requires standing in the gap when others can't.

Then comes Aaron's staff.

Dead wood, placed before the Lord, buds, blossoms, and bears almonds overnight. It's a quiet yet decisive answer. God doesn't just choose; He brings life from what He chooses. Real authority produces fruit. Not noise, not a platform, not slogans, but fruit.

By the time we reach chapters 17 and 18, the priesthood is clarified not to elevate Aaron's family above others but to protect the people. Boundaries around holiness are not exclusion—they are preservation. Without them, the presence of God would consume rather than dwell among Israel.

Korach teaches us this: not every challenge to authority is righteous, and not every claim to equality is aligned with God's order. There is a difference between the priesthood of all believers and the erasing of God-ordained roles. When we blur that line, we don't create unity, we create confusion.

And in the end, the question still stands: do we trust God enough to let Him define who draws near, how they draw near, and on what terms? Because the moment we take that into our own hands, we're not building something new...we're replaying Korach.

New Testament Tie-In

Bible quiz time...

- How many tribes of Israel are there?
- How many sons did Jacob have?
- Do the names of the tribes match the names of the sons?

Astute Bible students will note that there is no “Tribe of Joseph.” Near his death, Jacob blessed Joseph’s two sons—Ephraim and Manasseh—and said, “So now, your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, they are mine. Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just like Reuben and Simeon” (Genesis 48.5). Consequently, throughout Torah we read about the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, just as we do Reuben and Simeon.

However, that math doesn’t work—shouldn’t there be “thirteen tribes”? The answer to that question is in this week’s *parsha*.

“*ADONAI* said to Aaron, ‘You will have no inheritance in their land nor share among them. I am your portion and your share among *Bnei-Yisrael*.’” (Numbers 18.20)

The succinct version is that Ephraim and Manasseh “replaced” Joseph and Levi (at least as far as territory is concerned).

This leads to another question: where did Levi’s descendants live?

Later in the book of Numbers, we read a detailed account of God directing the nation of Israel to provide the priestly tribe with 48 cities (plus pastureland), which includes six “cities of refuge” (see Numbers 35). Rather than dwell within a defined border, the Levites would be “peppered” throughout the Promised Land. This arrangement would have had at least two “reminding” effects.

First, Israel would be reminded of God’s presence among them. Whether the house of Aaron or those of the clans of the Kohath, Gershon, or Merari, these were the only Israelites who handled the Tabernacle and its furnishings. Their presence in scattered towns visibly reminded Israel that God dwelt among them (see Exodus 25.8). And second, the Levites were reminded that their calling was bigger than themselves—they served all of God’s people. If they lived in a specific space with the Tabernacle, the Levites could’ve easily slipped into an echo chamber of delusion and self-importance. The lack of land was a grace that protected against this (understandable) temptation.

You’re in the will!

It’s fascinating that “will” can refer to at least two things. First, it describes a document that divides an estate or inheritance; second, it means one’s desire, intention, or decision.

Believers are often (rightfully) concerned about knowing or “being in” God’s will, and when they say that, it’s usually in the second sense (above). But we should also consider that first sense. That’s right—our heavenly Father has *that* kind of will too! Consider what Paul wrote in Colossians 1.11–12, “We pray that you may be strengthened with all the power that comes from His glorious might, for you to have all kinds of patience and steadfastness. With joy we give thanks to the Father, who qualified you to share in **the inheritance of the kedoshim** in the light.” (*emphasis added*)

If the priests in the old covenant had a supernatural inheritance, how much more should new covenant priests expect an inheritance? We rejoice with Peter’s declaration, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord *Yeshua* the Messiah! In His great mercy He caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Messiah *Yeshua* from the dead. An **incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance** has been reserved in heaven for you.” –1 Peter 1.3–4 (*emphasis added*)

Hebrew Word Study

edah [עדה] / "congregation, assembly"

The Hebrew word *edah* is often translated as "community," "assembly," or "congregation," but it means more than just a group of people gathered together. Its roots are tied to the idea of testimony or witness, deriving from the noun עֵד ('ēd), meaning "witness." This connection shows that *edah* is about a group united by shared memory, identity, and the duty to bear witness.

In the Hebrew Bible, *edah* usually refers to the people of Israel gathered together, especially at important moments such as Sinai, in the wilderness, and in their worship and laws. *Edah* differs from other Hebrew words for assembly, such as *kahal*. While *kahal* usually focuses on the act of gathering, often for formal or political reasons, *edah* highlights the relationships and shared testimony within the group. It describes a community that not only comes together but also keeps and shares a collective story, acting as a living record of God's actions with His people.

When the Torah speaks of the "congregation of Israel," it refers to a group entrusted to remember, repeat, and pass on God's words and deeds. For example, Exodus 12:3 says, "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: On the tenth day of this month, each man is to take a lamb for his family, one lamb for the household" (Tree of Life Version).

This difference stands out in the stories from Exodus and Numbers, where the *edah* receives God's instructions and responds together, whether or not they are faithful. The word *edah* includes everyone, not just leaders, showing that the duty to bear witness belongs to all. Even when the people complain or rebel, their shared identity as a community comes first. At their core, they are called to testify, even if fear or disobedience sometimes weakens their witness.

Looking at *edah* from a devotional angle, it challenges us to see community as more than just a matter of convenience or personal choice. Being part of the biblical *edah* means joining in a shared story that calls for active involvement. Members do more than show up; they bear witness through what they say, remember, obey, and how they live together. The community becomes a living testimony, showing who God is and what it means to be shaped by a covenant.

The idea of testimony also brings humility, reminding us that the community's main purpose is to represent faithfully what has been given to it, not just to express itself. The congregation's role is to receive and reflect what it has been entrusted with, not to invent its own meaning. This view makes communal life sacred and a trust.

So, *edah* invites us to rethink what it means to take part in community, moving the focus from personal gain to the testimony the group carries. To belong to the *edah* is to be part of a people whose lives point to a God who acts, speaks, and remembers, and to help make that reality known, even if imperfectly.

FUSION

Rabbi Jason & Fusion Global present
HEBREW WORD STUDY

עדה

עדה / Edah / n. community, assembly, congregation

עדה (edah) designates an assembled company bound together by covenant identity, purpose, or occasion. Found about 149 times, it regularly describes Israel gathered as one people, whether in worship, governance, warfare, or repentance. Unlike קהל (kahal), which stresses the act of assembling, עדה usually highlights the community itself—an identifiable body before God and the world.

The New Testament writers frequently cite Old Testament congregational scenes to define the church. Hebrews 2:12 quotes Psalm 22:22—“...I will sing Your praises in the assembly”—applying עדה language to believers gathered around the risen Messiah.

Taken from Lexical Summary at biblehub.org

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THOUGHTS for REFLECTION

Take some time this week to prayerfully consider and discuss with friends:

- Korach’s rebellion sounded spiritual on the surface, yet it was ultimately driven by ambition and resistance to God’s order. Have there been moments in your life where pride, frustration, or self-interest disguised itself as “righteousness” or spiritual conviction? How can humility, patience, and trust in God help guard your heart from confusing personal ambition with genuine obedience?
- Aaron’s staff, budding with life, demonstrated that true authority produces fruit rather than noise or self-promotion. When you evaluate spiritual leadership—either in others or in yourself—what kinds of fruit should matter most? In what ways can you pursue a life that quietly bears godly fruit rather than seeking recognition, influence, or control?

GLOBAL

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS: *Parashat Chukat-Balak* / פרשת חקת-בלק

TORAH

Sunday: Numbers 19:1-20:6

Monday: Numbers 20:7-21

Tuesday: Numbers 20:22-21:20

Wednesday: Numbers 21:21-22:12

Thursday: Numbers 22:13-38

Friday: Numbers 22:39-23:26

Saturday: Numbers 23:27-25:9

Prophetic Reading (*Haftarah*):

Micah 5:6-6:8

New Covenant Reading:

John 19:38-42; Matthew 21:1-11

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the Tree of Life Version.

¹Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 525.